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Sociological Theory and Social Control¹

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In the origins of sociology, "social control" served as a central concept both for relating sociology to social philosophy and for analyzing total societies. In its classical sense, it referred to the capacity of a social group to regulate itself. The concept supplied a basis for integration of theory and research until the 1930s. While the traditional usage of social control has persisted, the term has been redefined to mean either socialization or social repression. Either the classical meaning must be utilized or a new term must be developed to refer to the capacity of social groups to effect self-regulation if theory and research are to deal with macrosociology under advanced industrialism.

In the emergence of sociology as an intellectual discipline, the idea of social control was a central concept for analyzing social organization and the development of industrial society. Originally, the term dealt with a generic aspect of society and served as a comprehensive basis for a sociological examination of the social order. In fact, it was one intellectual device for linking sociological analysis to the human values and philosophical orientations employed by some pioneer sociologists interested in "social progress" and the reduction of irrationality in social behavior. In the most fundamental terms, "social control" referred to the capacity of a society to regulate itself according to desired principles and values. Sociological analysis has the task of exploring the conditions and variables likely to make this goal attainable.

In this paper, I shall seek first to set forth the intellectual parameters in the concept of social control as it was originally formulated in order to serve as the basis for a broad sociological frame of reference. Then I shall examine the early usage and diffusion of the concept. Third, I shall examine the efforts, starting in the 1930s, to transform its meaning into the narrower notion of the processes of developing conformity; in this connection, it is interesting to probe the reasons for this attempt to transform the meaning of social control. Finally, I shall examine the persistence of the classic usage of the concept by selected sociologists during the period since 1945 and thereby assess its relevance for contemporary

¹ This paper is a section of a larger study, "Macrosociology and Social Control." I am indebted to the Russell Sage Foundation, New York City, for a generous grant in support of this work.

sociology and for analyzing the crisis of political legitimacy in advanced industrial societies with parliamentary institutions.

Because some sociologists have come to define social control as the social psychology of conformity, sociological theory and analysis have suffered. This type of thinking contributes to the difficulty of relating the sociological enterprise to other social science disciplines as well as to social philosophy and to issues of professional practice and social policy. Either a new term had to be invented or the earlier meaning had to be reconstituted. I have chosen to retrace the intellectual history and usage of social control, since I believe that the concept in its original meaning can help to integrate bodies of empirical data with sociological theory, to codify research findings, and to handle questions of social values in sociological analysis. Moreover, one of my central arguments is that a close examination of the intellectual history of the idea of social control reveals that, despite the constriction of its original meaning in some quarters, its broad and generic meaning has had a strikingly persistent vitality for the study of the social order.

In 1925, George Herbert Mead wrote in the *International Journal of Ethics* that "social control depends, then, upon the degree to which individuals in society are able to assume attitudes of others who are involved with them in common endeavors" (Mead 1925). He was merely articulating, in his own conceptual terms, a widespread orientation in American sociology that had already been reflected in the first volume of the *American Journal of Sociology* in 1896. There George Vincent, a sociologist who still felt at ease with the language of social philosophy, offered the formulation: "Social control is the art of combining social forces so as to give society at least a trend toward an ideal" (p. 490). Social control has served and continues to serve as a shorthand notation for a complex set of views and viewpoints. It has been a "sensitizing concept," in the terminology of Herbert Blumer, or a "theoretical orientation," in that of Robert K. Merton. Moreover, social control has been directly linked to the study of total societies. It has stood for a comprehensive focus on the nation-state and a concern which has come to be called "macrosociology."

INTELLECTUAL PARAMETERS

The intellectual investment in the idea of social control derives from a rejection of economic self-interest theories. Social control has been an expression of the outlook that held that the individualistic pursuit of economic self-interest can account for neither collective social behavior nor the existence of a social order and does not supply an adequate basis for the achievement of ethical goals. Much of the writing about social control must be understood as sociologists' efforts to accept the relevance

but at the same time to identify the limitations of marginal-utility analysis.

In formal terms, one can think of social organization, the subject matter of sociology, as the patterns of influence in a population of social groups. Social control, therefore, is not to be conceived as being the same as social organization; it is instead a perspective which focuses on the capacity of a social organization to regulate itself; and this capacity generally implies a set of goals rather than a single goal. Social control is a perspective which, while committed to rigorous hypothesis testing, requires the explication of a value position.

Social control was not originally and subsequently has not been necessarily the expression of a conservative political outlook. Many early American sociologists who used the term were religious socialists; others were adherents of a "progressive" view. It is more to the point to emphasize that these early formulations parallel sociologists' contemporary interests in "value maximization." While social control involves the capacity of constituent groups in a society to behave in terms of their acknowledged moral and collective goals, it does not imply cultural relativism. The term has continuity because social control can be conceived as resting on a value commitment to at least to two elements: the reduction of coercion, although it recognizes the irreducible elements of coercion in a legitimate system of authority, and the elimination of human misery, although it recognizes the persistence of some degree of inequality. One should also mention a third element: a commitment to procedures of redefining societal goals in order to enhance the role of rationality, although this may be considered inherent in the first two.

The opposite of social control can be thought of as coercive control, that is, the social organization of a society which rests predominantly and essentially on force—the threat and the use of force. Of course, even in the most repressive totalitarian nation-state the agents of repression are limited in scope by some primitive, if unstable, set of norms. However, and more pertinent to the issue at hand, any social order, including a society with a relatively effective system of social control, will require an element of coercion, but presumably a limited one circumscribed by a system of legitimate norms.²

There is no doubt that early sociologists in the United States were vague about their social goals and their notions of the "ideal." Frequently, the ideal they offered was no better defined than as the spontaneously emergent and spontaneously accepted consensus. At times, they were no more specific

²Personal control is the psychological and personality counterpart of social control. The former focuses on a person's capacity to channel his energies and to satisfy his needs while minimizing disruption and damage to himself or others. It implies mastery over one's psychological environment and encompasses those psychological conditions that enhance rationality (Bettelheim and Janowitz 1964).

than to assert that the ideal referred to norms that were rationally accepted and internationalized in contrast with the conditions of coercive controls. Sociologists have become much more specific about the goals they wish to see maximized and therefore far more precise about the analysis of different patterns and mechanisms of social control.

Obviously, there are a variety of types and mechanisms of social control. Each is the result of particular antecedent variables and, in turn, each form has a different impact on social behavior. The task of empirical social research is to investigate the forms and consequences of social control. In essence, this means answering the hypothetical question, Which forms of social control are most effective, that is, which enable a social group to regulate itself in terms of a set of legitimate moral principles and result in the reduction of coercive control?³

This perspective explicitly negates the assertion that social organization per se represses personality, social creativity, and collective problem solving. In the simplest terms, social control is not the achievement of collective stability. The vital residue of the classical standpoint is that social control organizes the cleavages, strains, and tensions of any society—peasant, industrial, or advanced industrial. The problem is whether the processes of social control are able to maintain the social order while transformation and social change take place. There is no question that, from this point of view, there is a parallel between social control and stability or repression. The argument that is relevant here is just the opposite: social control, to the extent that it is effective, “motivates” social groups. All this seems painfully obvious; but one purpose of a theoretical orientation is to make the obvious inescapable.

Exploration of the idea of social control requires one to recognize that its emergence was part of a continuing critique of and response to the *Gemeinschaft-Gesellschaft* model. Under the influence of philosophical pragmatism and the impact of empirical research, the dichotomous categories of *Gemeinschaft-Gesellschaft* were found to be both oversimplified and inadequate (Tönnies 1887). I speak not only of Ferdinand Tönnies's exposition but also of the stream of parallel or related writers. These include Henry Maine (status and contract), Émile Durkheim (mechanical and organic solidarity), Charles Horton Cooley (primary and secondary groups), Robert Redfield (folk culture and urban culture), Louis Wirth (urbanism as a way of life), Ralph Linton (ascription and achievement), and Talcott Parsons (pattern variables) (Maine 1861; Durkheim 1893; Cooley 1909; Redfield 1947; Wirth 1938; Linton 1936; Parsons 1951).

³ In the contemporary period, Amitai Etzioni defines control in a fashion similar to the classic orientation found in social control. “Control—the process of specifying preferred states of affairs and revising ongoing processes to reduce the distance from these preferred states.” His theoretical model is derived from cybernetics (1968, p. 668).

The converging elements of these formulations have had a powerful impact on sociological theory and analysis. At the same time, there is a tradition of criticism of the writings of Tönnies and those who have followed his formulations that is almost as long standing and enduring as the *Gemeinschaft-Gesellschaft* model itself. Among the European sociologists who have dissented from Tönnies's orientation are Georg Simmel (1922), Herman Schmalenbach (1961), Theodor Geiger (1926, 1963), and Rene Koenig (1955). The accumulated empirical evidence from anthropological and sociological sources with a historical perspective indicates that peasant societies are not wholly *Gemeinschaft* entities, as Tönnies used the term. The inability of the model to account for the variety of solidary collectivities that emerge in advanced industrial societies is equally noteworthy.

Much of the criticism of the *Gemeinschaft-Gesellschaft* approach is not an effort to reject its central concern with societal transformation.⁴ Instead, it is an attempt to recast the approach to make it effectively applicable to the analysis of the alternative historical paths by which societies have become urbanized and industrialized. It is difficult, if not impossible, to think of the emergence of modern society in terms of an "evolutionary" transformation from "community" into "society" that is the result of a limited number of basic variables and a linear model of social change and societal transformation. Thus, the criticism has had the consequence of freeing the model from its historical mythography and refashioning its conceptual dimensions and variables into testable hypotheses.

As a result, the notion of social control has been formulated and elaborated to provide a more adequate approach to problems of social change and social order. Sociological theories of the social order thereby have come to reject the assertion that the *Gemeinschaft* aspects of societal structure are only residues of some previous stage of social organization while the *Gesellschaft* dimensions constitute the reality of industrial and urban society. Instead, social organization encompasses, at any given historical moment, essential and elaborated elements of both *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* in varying scope, intensity, and consequence. The analysis of social control is an analysis of the interplay of those variables which can be related to both *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* attributes. Moreover, the concept of social control is directly linked to the notion of voluntaristic action, to articulated human purpose and actions—that is, to various schemes of means and ends. Therefore it is designed to avoid the over-

⁴ Robert A. Nisbet is representative of those sociological theorists who are aware of the centrality of the concepts of *Gemeinschaft-Gesellschaft* in contemporary research and emphasize the necessity of departing from the original mechanistic and linear model of change. He writes, "A relationship that begins as a *Gesellschaft* type may in time become increasingly characterized by *Gemeinschaft* relationships among members" (1970, p. 107).

deterministic sociology which has come to be inherent in the *Gemeinschaft-Gesellschaft* model. Social control presents a format of influence based on the notion of interaction and mutual (two-way) relations among social groups. To speak of mutual influence is hardly to deny the elements of inequality and imbalance in social relations.

Sociologists who have used the concept of social control have in effect been following the intellectual lead of Auguste Comte, for whom the central problem of sociological analysis was the impact of industrialization on the social order and the consequences of the resulting individualism on the moral order. Obviously, the classic writers, including Karl Marx, Émile Durkheim, and Max Weber, addressed themselves to the issues Comte raised. One can translate much of the corpus of sociological writing on macrosociology into the language of the social control framework, but to do so would obscure rather than clarify the issues involved. It is preferable to focus directly on that distinct sociological stream which in varying degree makes explicit use of the idea of social control. Though mainly an American stream, it is influenced by and in turn has influenced European thought and research. It presents both a unity and a continuing elaboration.

First, the original writers and, in time, the subsequent ones as well have manifested a philosophical outlook concerned with the limits of rationality in pursuing social and moral aims. Their outlook has reflected pragmatism in the majority of the writers, but for some it also has included aspects of phenomenology. An essential element of this orientation has been the rejection or, rather, the avoidance of either idealism or materialism.

Second, the adherents of social control have been concerned with informal, face-to-face relations as aspects of social structure. In contemporary language, they have been preoccupied with the interface between micro- and macroanalysis.

Third, the style of these sociologists has been one of persistent concern with empirical exploration of their ideas. They have been self-critical about appropriate empirical techniques, continually in search of various types of documentation and data, and fully aware of the complexities and elusive character of proof in sociology.

Therefore there is a direct line of intellectual continuity from the earliest efforts to formulate the component elements of social control to its usage by contemporary research sociologists aware of its intellectual background and theoretical purpose. The concept hardly implies that the subject matter of sociology is the "adjustment" of men to existing social reality; on the contrary, since its early use, the thrust of this stream of sociological discourse has been to focus on efforts of men to realize their collective goals. The continuity between the early writers on social control and particular efforts in contemporary research is manifested in such works as the penetrating research on juvenile delinquency by Albert J. Reiss, Jr. (1951).

Conceptualizing his operational measures in terms of social control, he refers to it as “the ability of social groups or institutions to make norms or rules effective.”

Likewise, there is a continuity between the early analysis of social control that included the study of social and political movements—the processes of revolution, protest, and institution building—as described in the seminal study by Lyford Edwards (1927) and contemporary interest in collective behavior.⁵ Thus, the theoretical and empirical tasks of sociologists who use the social control orientation have been and continue to be to identify and wherever possible to quantify the magnitude of the variables which facilitate or hinder the group pursuit of collective moral goals.

The pioneer sociologists who thought in terms of social control worked on specific empirical topics and in time applied their efforts to a very broad range of topics in the register of social research. Initially they did tend to focus on macrosociological issues, such as law and the formation of legal codes, the emergence of public opinion and collective behavior, and informal and mass media of communication, as well as “traditional” elements, such as customs, “mores,” and religion. Louis Wirth, an articulate spokesman for this intellectual tradition, asserted the centrality of the processes of “persuasion, discussion, debate, education, negotiation, parliamentary procedure, diplomacy, bargaining, adjudication, contractual relations, and compromise.” For him, these processes had to serve as the means for arriving at a sufficient degree of agreement to make the ongoing life of a society possible, despite differences in interests (1948, pp. 31–32).

At this point, an important caveat must be entered. Much of the empirical and substantive writings about social control deals with norms and normative behavior. Norms are often used as the indicators of social control—the dependent variables, so to speak. But social control does not rest on an exclusively normative conception of elements of social organization and society. As will be demonstrated, it did not do so originally and cannot now if it is to serve as a guide to empirical research and to the codification of research findings. On the contrary, the continuing relevance of social control theory reflects the fact that its assumptions and variables incorporate the ecological, technological, economic, and institutional dimensions of social organization.

EARLY USAGE OF SOCIAL CONTROL

The term “social control” first figures prominently in the writings of E. A. Ross, who was strongly influenced by Gabriel Tarde, a sociologist with

⁵ *The Natural History of Revolution* (1927) by Lyford Edwards was prepared in collaboration with Robert E. Park. It demonstrates the manner in which the empirical study of revolution was related to the elaboration of the concept of social control.

powerful insights into French society and deeply involved in empirical social research (Clark 1969). Tarde himself did not emphasize the term, but he did present a broadly ranging analysis of the complex processes required to produce social agreement through mass persuasion. He was concerned with the mechanisms required to generate effective leadership and legislation which would regulate social change.

While working at Stanford University in 1894, Ross decided that the idea of social control was a “key that unlocks many doors”; that is, it served as a notion to bridge the various institutions which concerned him.⁶ Again and again, he used the concept to explain how men “live closely together and associate their efforts with that degree of harmony we see about us.” Basically, Ross was concerned with the social conditions that created harmony. Much of his writing consisted of detailed descriptions of the mechanisms of social control. While he was fully aware of the coercive elements in industrial society, he focused on the devices of persuasion, both interpersonal and institutional. He was impressed with the extent to which persuasion as well as manipulation was operative. His analysis encompassed the processes of face-to-face interaction and sociability and those of public opinion and legal control. However, he was interested not merely in devices of persuasion but also in a generic conception of society that would explain those devices which operate to “find a means of guiding the will or conscience of the individual members of society” (Ross 1901, p. 59). His usage of social control brought this term into the center of sociological inquiry, but it remained for other sociologists to use the idea more rigorously and to enrich its intellectual relevance.

During the founding period of sociology in the United States, two major figures—Charles Horton Cooley and W. I. Thomas—gave centrality to social control and its relation to rational control in their writings. There were strong elements of convergence in their interests, but the differences were important.⁷ Cooley was a more systematic and coherent thinker than Ross, and his approach to social control was based on a thoughtful, normative orientation. He drove directly to his main preoccupation, which reflected the pervasive influence of pragmatism among the sociologists of that period.⁸

⁶ Ross (1936, p. 56) noted that Herbert Spencer had employed the word “control” in 1892 in his *Principles of Sociology*, vol. 2, pt. 4. While Spencer did not give it central importance in his analysis, his usage undoubtedly was an influence on Ross. In addition, see Borgatta and Meyer (1959).

⁷ William G. Sumner never made explicit use of the term “social control,” yet, because of the issues raised in his *Folkways* (1906), his name is linked to this concept. Sumner defined “folkways” as habits and customs which serve as the basis for the “regulation and imperative” for succeeding generations.

⁸ In 1911, L. L. Bernard published his treatise on social control which contained a

His approach, of course, rests on an interactional social philosophy which he helped to develop. Social control was essential for the growth of the self through the process of interaction. Likewise, it rested to an important degree on self-control. Cooley used the notion of the primary group—face-to-face relations—but he had few constructions for dealing with the internalization of norms, although he asserted that “individuality” was a crucial element for effective and meaningful social control.

However, he was a powerful thinker because he struggled to relate his interactional approach to the larger society. Cooley’s link with the classic question of social order and his outlook on social control under conditions of industrialization are summarized in his chapter, “Social Control in International Relations.” In his words, “A ripe nationality is favorable to international order for the same reasons that a ripe individuality is favorable to order in a small group. It means that we have coherent, self-conscious and more or less self-controlled elements out of which to build our system [of nations]” (1920).

Thomas approached social control from a different but related principle of pragmatic philosophy. In his view, the essential issue for both sociologists and persons in public and social affairs was to increase the importance and effectiveness of “rational control in social life.” Open mindedly—and in a sense paradoxically—like many European sociologists, Thomas raised the question of the impact of rational thought in weakening the social fabric of society. “We are less and less ready to let any social process go on without our active interference and we feel more and more dissatisfied with any active interference based upon a mere whim of an individual or a social body, or upon preconceived philosophical, religious, or moral generalization” (Thomas and Znaniecki 1918–20, 1:1; Janowitz 1966, p. 37).

Unlike Cooley, Thomas was trained in classical literature and history, and he developed an interest in the comparative sociological study of specific cultures and societies. He was fully aware of the writings of Tönnies, whose formulation he rejected because of its simple evolutionary bias, its failure to describe adequately either peasant society or modern social organization, and particularly its implied hostility to individual freedom and creativity. Thomas offered no single set of determinant causes of social change, although he was clearly the most systematic of the founding sociologists concerned with social control. Thomas had a comprehensive outlook toward the dimensions of social organization and social control. He offered a highly differentiated orientation which sought to incorporate variables reflecting ecology, economy, and technology into his analysis of social control. His orientation, of necessity, suffered because of eclecticism.

sociological critique of utilitarian philosophy. These themes were later emphasized in sociological analysis as part of the “theory of action.”

He saw society in institutional terms as consisting of a set of irreducible social groups, from primary groups to complex bureaucratic structures. Social control depended on effective linkage or articulation among these elements; social disorganization resulted from their disarticulation.

While Ross was stimulated by Tarde to propose the term "social control," the writings of Georg Simmel were important ingredients in fashioning the outlooks of W. I. Thomas and, later, Robert E. Park, both of whom pressed to develop an empirical base for analysis of social control in the urban metropolis. In his classic article, "The Mental Life of the Metropolis," Simmel demonstrated his resistance to the categories derived from the *Gemeinschaft-Gesellschaft* model (1903). He was, rather, concerned with the changing and alternative bases of group life. He did not conceptualize individuality as inherently self-destructive or destructive of social control. The analysis of individuality had to include the possibilities of forms of autonomy and personal freedom (Levine 1971).

Simmel's writings did not express any existing philosophy of history. In fact, they articulated with the orientation of American sociologists of the pragmatic persuasion. In particular, Simmel did not conclude that the complexity of modern society and its range of group affiliations automatically implied the loss of individuality or that it was necessarily disintegrative. His "Die Kreuzung sozialer Kreise," translated by Reinhard Bendix as "The Web of Group Affiliations," argues the opposite. In effect, each new group to which a person becomes affiliated "circumscribes" him more exactly and more unambiguously (Simmel 1955, pp. 140–41). In other words, as a person becomes affiliated with a social group, he surrenders himself to it. However, the larger the number of groups to which the individual belongs, the more unlikely or improbable it will be that other persons will exhibit the same combination of group affiliations. Therefore, "the person also regains his individuality because his pattern of participation is unique." In essence, Simmel rejected the assertion that participation engendered only social constraint and conformity or, alternatively, individuality resulted only from withdrawal. He held that individuality was the result of a pattern of social participation and the outcome of specific types of social control.

The central themes of Durkheim's writings converge with the early formulation of social control and are thus a related aspect of the intellectual history of the conception. He did not use the term or an equivalent formulation. But his persistent search for the "determination of moral facts" is his version of the problematic issue involved in social control; this is perhaps most clearly seen in *Sociologie et philosophie* (1924). Moreover, his empirical study, *Suicide* (1897), has come to supply the link between his work and the subsequent generations of writers concerned with social control.

Obviously, one cannot overlook the existence of a body of literature

criticizing Durkheim for his failure to offer an effective analysis of the internalization of the norms on which he rests his analysis. Likewise, Durkheim's framework has not served as a contribution to critical evaluation of the *Gemeinschaft-Gesellschaft* themes in sociology but has, in effect, been incorporated into this dominant perspective. While his work has been an important stimulus to empirical research, in contrast to the main body of writing on social control as it has subsequently emerged, his orientation has presented a relatively overdeterministic frame of reference with only limited exploration of the voluntaristic elements in the "moral order."

DIFFUSION OF THE CONCEPT

By 1920, the term "social control" had emerged in the United States as representing a central theoretical thrust by which sociologists sought to integrate their substantive and empirical interests. For the next 20 years, while sociology was becoming institutionalized as an academic discipline, the writings of both Robert E. Park and Robert M. MacIver—although they were extremely different thinkers—served to maintain the notion that social control is a device for integrating diverse elements of sociological analysis.

Social control was used as the organizing theme of the national convention of the American Sociological Association in 1917. There a wide range of empirical topics were explored, such as child welfare, immigration, labor relations, and economic organization. The papers presented made striking efforts to be explicit in evaluating the effectiveness of elements in the process of social control (Bedford 1918). In 1921, Robert E. Park and Ernest W. Burgess assessed the state of sociology, in *Introduction to the Science of Sociology*, by asserting: "All social problems turn out to be problems of social control" (p. 785). In contemporary language, social control is the outcome, in various forms and content, of social organization. It is the construct which helps to relate and interrelate the dependent variables of empirical research. Moreover, since they linked social control to social problems, sociologists of that period saw it as a vehicle for joining sociological analysis to issues of social policy and for dealing with issues of deviance.

To understand the full connotations of social control in that intellectual setting, one has only to turn to its references and cross-references. Social control pointedly encompassed law and leadership, key elements for understanding how society regulates itself. In the Park and Burgess volume, the list of cross-references even included the word "participation"; the explication of this cross-reference was based on an analysis of the "immigrant problem" viewed as a problem in lack of participation (p. 766).

Sociologists of this period did not perceive social control as a mechanism of conformity. Society did not and could not exist on the basis of conformity but required active elements of collective problem solving. Nor did the explicit philosophical preferences of these sociologists permit them to equate social control with conformity. Social control raised the question of how society regulated itself and changed. In reply, Park and Burgess postulated a sequence or "natural history" of collective behavior that was rooted in conflict and from which few forms of social control could emerge. "Social control and the mutual subordination of individual members to the community have their origin in conflict, assume definite organized forms in the process of accommodation, and are consolidated and fixed in assimilation" (Park and Burgess 1921, p. 785).

As Ralph Turner has asserted, Park's explication of social control drew on analogies from the competitive processes of ecology, to which he added those forms of social communication that constrained the ecological processes (Turner 1967). He posed a formulation of the underlying processes of social control that fused ecological, institutional, and normative variables. "Competition and communication, although they perform divergent and uncoordinated social functions, nevertheless in the actual life of society supplement and complete each other. Competition seems to be the principle of individuation in the life of the person and of society—communication, on the other hand, operates primarily as an integrating and socializing principle" (Park 1950, p. 43; 1952, pp. 240–62). He went on to argue that the initial consequence of new forms of communication is to intensify competition. However, "in the long run," improved communication can contribute "to humanize social relations and to substitute a moral order for one that is fundamentally symbiotic rather than social."

In contrast, Robert M. MacIver's interest in political theory and the role of the state led to his producing works which brought the dimension of coercion, especially legitimate force, into social control in a fashion that paralleled Max Weber's orientation. For MacIver, an element of coercion was involved in social control; the problematic issues were the amount and the minimization of coercion.

MacIver accepted the idea that social control was the modern equivalent of the classic issue of social order. Social control meant both elements: the institutional mechanisms by which society regulated individual behavior and the "way in which patterned and standardized behavior in turn serves to maintain the social organization" (MacIver and Page 1949, p. 137). One striking avenue he investigated was social control in 19th-century utopian communities in the United States. MacIver was searching for hypothetical equivalents of existing patterns of social control and was particularly interested in the capacity of purposefully constructed utopian communities to adapt to social change and to engage in collective problem

solving. Reflecting his frame of reference, he concluded that, because the social organization of these communities permitted very limited, or insufficient, individualization, they were incomplete societies and therefore suffered a very high rate of "mortality."⁹

During the 1920s and early 1930s, the term "social control" supplied an essential bridge to the influential work of institutional economists. In the United States, such economists included Thorstein Veblen, John Maurice Clark, Wesley C. Mitchell, and Walton H. Hamilton.¹⁰ They believed that the mechanisms of the marketplace and competition supplied an essential but only partial basis for understanding economic behavior. Clark, in *Social Control of Business*, presented the core of the institutional economists' effort to make use of the sociological notion of social control (1926). He was firmly committed to the centrality of effective utilization of market mechanisms for allocating resources. However, it was clear to him that the basic structure of modern society does not rest in the competitive economic process. Society requires a set of informal and formal norms which highlight "cooperative" arrangements. In effect, he rejected the notion of countervailing power—of society-wide organization as derived from the competition of large-scale or different types of economic organizations. Instead, he asserted that the governmental system—legislative and legal—supplies the framework for the cooperative elements of the modern economic system.

Comparable to the linkage of social control with economics was the work of "realist" scholars in law, politics, and psychology. The most outstanding writer in the sociology of law was Roscoe Pound, whose 1942 study of *Social Control through Law* anticipated contemporary approaches. In political science, Charles E. Merriam made use of the social control concept in empirical research into political and governmental institutions (1936). During this period, another vigorous intellectual current that fed the concern with social control derived from the writings of Mary Parker Follett, the psychologist of administration. She was groping, with profound insight, toward a sociological formulation of administrative control that would encompass the essential elements of the social process, and she broke with the view of administration as a system of constraints. "We get control through effective integration. Authority should arise within the unifying process. As every living process is subject to its own authority,

⁹ Other sociologists who pursued the analytic aspects of social control before 1940 include Kimball Young (1934), Paul Landis (1939), and L. L. Bernard (1937).

¹⁰ These institutional economists constituted a body of scholars with sociological interest who produced, for more than two decades, important research on industrial and economic organization. With the decline of the industrial school of economists, sociologists unfortunately have failed to incorporate fully the topics of social control of economic and industrial life in their domain.

that is, the authority evolved by or involved in the process itself, so social control is generated by the process itself. Or rather, the activity of self-creating coherence is the controlling activity" (Follett 1941, p. 204; see also Pigors 1935).

By the 1930s, the American sociologists' theoretical and empirical concerns with social control had begun to have a discernible impact on European thought. Karl Mannheim followed the American literature closely and served as a focal point of interpretation. In his elaborate treatise, *Man and Society in an Age of Reconstruction* (1940), Mannheim made social control a central point of departure for his analysis. Interested in political sociology, he introduced and focused attention on the role of parliamentary institutions in the processes of social control in an advanced industrial society. For him, freedom was a particular type and quality of social control; it was required under advanced industrialism if social planning were not to degenerate into authoritarian rule. He believed that the processes of social control, to be effective, had, in turn, to rest on vigorous parliamentary institutions. Under the influence of Max Weber, he sought to analyze, in the broadest terms, the transformation of social structure and authority relations, and he highlighted the shift that he saw toward indirect authority with the concomitant profound strains on social control. His work was striking in the extent to which he incorporated the detailed findings of empirical sociological research on American social structure. In essence, Mannheim prepared the intellectual groundwork for incorporating political sociology and the analysis of mass society into the study of social control.

CONCEPTUAL CONTINUITY

Although "social control" persisted as a coordinating term of reference in American sociology through 1940, the constricted and narrow meaning of the term was already coming into force. The alternate formulation of social control as a process of socialization leading to conformity was being postulated by sociologists who called themselves social psychologists. This trend becomes evident when one examines, not the theoretical treatises of the period, but the titles of doctoral dissertations and journal articles concerned with socialization and the process of persuasion, interpersonal and mass.

How does one account for this transformation or apparent shift?

First, the fact that there is a natural history of sociological ideas may afford a partial explanation. Under the impact of empirical research, broad conceptions that have served as sources of stimulation become converted in time into more specific and delimited topics of research. However convincing in itself, this is hardly an adequate explanation. Review of the literature and interviews with figures active during this period do not

permit the conclusion that the diffuseness and shortcomings of the idea of social control—and there are many—account for the apparent transformation. It is necessary to consider additional factors.

Second, the power analysis and modified versions of economic determinism derived from the writings of Karl Marx had the unanticipated consequence of weakening a concern with the voluntaristic and purposeful process of modifying the social order. This occurred during the Great Depression and the New Deal, which created ideological and political currents that impinged on sociology in a fashion comparable with the events of the 1960s and made the idea of social control or any equivalent unpopular. The result was an oversimplified focus on power and power relations and on uncritical acceptance of the notion of mass society. To speak of social control was perceived as impeding those social and economic changes that members of the sociological profession considered essential.

As a result, after the interruption in academic life during World War II, the subject matter of social control came to reflect increasingly the specialized interests of sociologists concerned with research on institutions dealing with socialization and resocialization, such as the mental hospital or school.¹¹ The research topics covered under “social control,” at the national and regional meetings and in journal and monograph publications, show that the processes of social control in these terms were investigated in an ever-widening range of institutional settings. Paradoxically, the relevance of these empirical researches rested in their findings, which might well have been anticipated, concerning the limitations of dominant leaders and organization administrators in enforcing norms and the capacity of informal groups to modify norms or participate in redirecting goals. Even in the narrow investigation of the enforcement of norms, such sociologists and social psychologists were forced to recognize the requirements of institutional life and the societal order. They sought to deal with basic issues, relabeling “social control” as “social regulation” (Cummings 1968).

The narrow delimitation of social control as the process of social conformity, although widely used in sociological research, did not and could not displace the classical usage of the concept. Since 1945 the latter, with its broad and fundamental import, has continued to appear and reappear

¹¹ Of course, it would be an error to conclude that the narrow social-psychological definition of social control as conformity was accepted by all social psychologists of either the psychological or the sociological persuasion. A variety of social psychologists concerned with social values resisted. Without effective reference to the previous literature, they came in time almost to reinvent the older conception of social control. A thoughtful example of the countertrend is found in Scott and Scott (1971), who boldly introduce their work with the assertion, “Even a purely objective attitude toward the phenomenon of social control provides some safeguard against the concept of control by a superman, for either good or evil purposes. This is the fact that control is always a mutual affair” (p. 1). See also the penetrating formulation by Litwak (1956, pp. 217–23).

with persistence and vitality in the writings of certain sociologists. Clearly, the new reliance on biological and electronic analogies has not completely displaced or rendered obsolete this traditional line of sociological thinking.¹²

Any review of the continuity and vitality of the idea of social control must accord an important place to the writings and research of Everett Hughes and his students. As the post-World War II expansion of academic sociology was starting, Hughes published his influential essay "Institutions" (1946). For him, one central issue of social control was the socialization and the organization of occupational, especially professional, groups. Hughes's theoretical and empirical writings stimulated a crucial body of literature analyzing and assessing processes of regulation and self-regulation of skilled groups in modern society.¹³

Hughes drew on currents in social anthropology. In particular, the research of specific British and American social anthropologists served to reinforce the interest of students of social control in intensive fieldwork during a period when the emerging trend in sociology was toward survey research methodology. Anthropologists seeking to use the concept of social control to integrate their ethnographic materials and maintain linkages with the intellectual traditions of sociology by this approach included Raymond Firth (1951), S. F. Nadel (1953, 1957), J. S. Slotkin (1950), and Jack Goody (1957).

The post-World War II functionalist maintained a concern with and orientation toward social control. Throughout the body of Talcott Parsons's writing, there is a central focus on the essential elements of a social order. His explicit interest in the social control concept derived from his explication of Émile Durkheim. In *The Structure of Social Action* (1937), he asserted that Durkheim "not only gained great insight into the nature of social control, but also into the role and importance of moral conformity."¹⁴ In *The Social System* (1951), the analysis of social control figures more prominently as a core element in his explanation of the patterning of deviant behavior. Parsons's writings have had a strong influence on the studies of deviance made by a variety of empirical research sociologists.¹⁵

¹² For an interesting treatise on continuities in the use of the social control concept, see Richard T. LaPiere (1954).

¹³ Hughes's interest in social control is to be found implicitly in the works of Erving Goffman, Anselm Strauss, and Howard Becker.

¹⁴ Parsons's analysis seeks to assess the contributions—plus their degree of convergence—of a variety of classical sociologists to the extension and reformulation of basic questions of the social order. Thus this volume is a key resource in the intellectual history of sociology and the issues involved in social control. In a very compact fashion, Percy Cohen has reviewed these linkages, and his effort makes possible the conclusion that "modern sociology" has, in effect, abandoned the older question of how society emerged and concentrates on that of how the social order persists (1968, especially chap. 2).

¹⁵ While a great deal of the writing and research on deviance came to reflect the

In the work of a number of Parsons's students, the issue of social control continue to be explicated. In *Human Society*, Kingsley Davis joined his conception of functionalism to the idea of social control. "It is through them [social controls] that human society regulates the behavior of its members in such ways that they perform activities fulfilling societal needs—even, sometimes, at the expense of organic needs" (1948, p. 52). He focused on institutional arrangements for regulation and control by pointedly comparing the mechanisms of social control in totalitarian societies with those in the multiparty states of the West. Likewise, the social control of science has been used to focus attention both on the conditions under which science develops and on the social and political consequences of scientific knowledge. Bernard Barber, in *Science and the Social Order* (1952), has probed the direct involvement of scientists in wartime research and the new orientations toward their social responsibility that have emerged.

The continuing impact of the issues of social order was to be found, after 1945, among a group of sociologists concerned with macrosociology. It was to be expected that Reinhard Bendix and Bennett Berger would display a strong concern with these issues and the conditions under which social order is maintained. Following directly on Simmel's formulations, they postulate alternative consequences of group participation in a fashion that converges with traditional notions of social control. They emphasize that social participation in its generic form produces more than "socializing" effects, the central concern of empirical sociologists (Bendix and Berger 1959). They also stress the potentiality of an alternative set of outcomes, namely, "individualizing" effects, that requires a careful and richer language of analysis. The individualizing effects are not at all equated with personal anomie but are at the root of autonomy, creativity, and problem solving—elements consistent with and to some degree essential for a social order and effective social control.

In an alternative way, Edward Shils has sought to explicate the dimension of social order and social control of a mass society (1962). The essential transformation of modern society rests not only in its industrial and technological base but also in the effort to incorporate the "mass of the population" into the society's central institutional and value systems as a result of the social and political process of fundamental democratization, to use Mannheim's terminology (Mannheim 1940). Shils has tried to give a normative dimension to the ecological structure of the nation-state with his emphasis on the "center" and the "periphery" (1961). The

narrower and more constricted view of social control, the following expositions deal with broad societal issues and thereby reflect earlier formulations: Clark and Gibbs (1965); Gibbs (forthcoming); and Stephenson (1973).

particular relevance of Shils's writings rests in his use of the word "civility" to characterize the patterns of interaction and social relations required for the reduction of coercion and manipulation in the social order of mass society.

It is interesting that George Homans, before his acceptance of the "behavioral" assumption of conditioning psychology, made use of "social control" in its traditional meaning. In this he was stimulated by Mary Parker Follett's writings. "Social control is not a separate department of group life—instead control, to a greater or lesser degree, is inherent in everyday relationships between members of the group" (Homans 1951, p. 365). For him, interaction supplies the basis for empirical investigation of social control in "at least two somewhat different languages" (p. 94). Social control can be described in terms of "distribution of goods, such as money, and intangible goods, such as the enjoyment of high social rank."

Barrington Moore, Jr., in a markedly different style, concerned with the historical transformation of societies, poses the question traditionally associated with social control in his essay on "Reflections on Conformity in Industrial Society" (1958). He considers himself not a student of the abstract principles of the human group but a sociologist of comparative sociopolitical systems. For him, social control involves an element of repression—conscious or unconscious. He feels that "in the mature man, we simply call it self-control" (p. 193). Moore has thus approached social control from the reverse side, namely, how much conformity does an advanced industrial society require? First, he is attracted to the idea that, in such a society, more of "this ancient virtue" is required, not less. The societal context for self-control derives from the fact that the practical problem is compounded by a paradox. "There may be less of the self-control now imposed by scarcity," while "a wider range of material opportunities and temptations may require a stronger exercise of this capacity" (p. 193).

Second, Moore, strangely enough, finds the primary need for conformity in the arena of culture, whether broadly defined (as by anthropologists) or narrowly defined to include only certain appreciated cultural, artistic, and intellectual attainments. It is not the arena of technology that generates the need for conformity but "the simple fact that the achievements of human culture require effort and discipline, not only to create them but merely to appreciate them" (p. 186).¹⁶ This line of reasoning is not an expression of sociological perversity; instead, it represents Moore's thoughtful search for the requirements of an advanced industrial society able to regulate and control itself.

¹⁶ Andrew Hacker (1957) has restated the issues of contemporary political elite theory in terms of social control (see also Cook 1957).

CONTINUING EXPLICATION

In summary, the idea of social control has been a central formulation in the origin and development of sociology as an intellectual discipline. Moreover, particular sociologists have not abandoned the intellectual heritage and problematic issues associated with the idea, for there can be no sociology without a concern for the elements of a social order. An inventory of contemporary usage indicates that the efforts to substitute the language of social systems or of biological and cybernetic models do not suffice to supplant older conceptualizations. In fact, Wilbert E. Moore has concluded, in his assessment of "social structure and behavior," that the "old-fashioned sociological term, social control, seems appropriate to revive," to handle the combination of external controls and individual internalization of the moral order (1967, pp. 171–219). The particular term is not the issue, of course. The issue is the analytic formulation that highlights the preconditions and variables that maximize the self-regulation of society and take into consideration the realities of social constraints, whether they have their origins in ecological, economic, or normative factors.

Therefore, I would argue that the idea of social control—in its traditional meaning and contemporary explication—should serve as a powerful antidote to the "crisis in sociology" outlook as exemplified by the writings of Alvin W. Gouldner, among others (Gouldner 1970). No doubt some sociologists have become disappointed with the capacity of their sociological endeavors to alter the sociopolitical process. Others have become personally fatigued and discontented with the style of life of the teacher in the university setting, and as a result they have less zeal for their intellectual tasks. A sociologist who has entered his calling with a belief in the philosopher-king assumption is certain to face a crisis at some point.

The phrase "crisis in sociology" must mean that sociology is progressively more and more unable to explain and clarify social change in contemporary society. There is no need to exaggerate the maturity of sociology and the cumulative character of its research efforts. Nor is there any need to overlook the vast amount of marginal research. But the present state of sociology is to be assessed not in terms of the wide range of its undertakings but, rather, by the vitality of relevant streams—even if they are minority efforts. Therefore, while particular sociologists may experience a crisis, there is no basis for asserting that there is a crisis in the intellectual discipline. Any "crisis" resides in the real world. The advanced industrial nations with parliamentary institutions are experiencing crises in their ability to regulate themselves, particularly in their political institutions. The intellectual *Fragestellung* (posing of the question) linked to the idea of social control constitutes a relevant standpoint for assessing this crisis in political legitimacy.

The reemergence of a focus on social control in its traditional sense (or relabeled variously, for example, as “social regulation,” in contemporary language) has the advantage of being able to draw on increased intellectual self-consciousness among sociologists. The following points are essential, although an adequate explication of them remains beyond the scope of this paper and will be presented in my larger study, “Social Control and Macrosociology.”

First, the social control perspective, as it has developed, supplies an appropriate level of abstraction for the study of social organization and social change. In fact, the social control perspective stands in contrast to the post–World War II trend, in which much theorizing used a high level of generality. Originally, social control theory was formulated at a more concrete level of abstraction. It required a set of taxonomic and analytically differentiated categories as the basic elements of analysis. Specifically, social control scholars postulated that social stratification and social class categories were insufficient for the analysis of social organization and social change. There was an explicit concern with institutions and institutional analysis. Under the rubric “institutions,” sociologists investigated an endless range of subjects that reflected their personal tastes more than a set of analytic units and objects of analysis. But from the very beginning of their empirical research, sociologists concerned with social control have been aware of the necessity of grouping their subject matters in a broader analytical category system—but one which would not lose sight of the substantive reality.

Thus, slowly, the variety of research on delinquent gangs, work teams, play groups, and the like became more and more explicitly fused into the study of primary groups, reflecting the writings of Charles H. Cooley and W. I. Thomas. Under Robert F. Park’s stimulus, the host of analyses of territorial units and residential patterns merged into a common interest in community structures. Another core of these subject-matter concerns was the transformation of the study of specific corporate institutions into the analysis of bureaucratic organizations, under the influence of Max Weber and Chester Barnard. From study of a myriad of interesting institutions, there emerged the perspective that such categories as primary groups, community structures, and bureaucratic organizations were essential elements for converting the description of social stratification and socioeconomic class patterns into effective analysis of the “social system” or the nation-state. The random investigation of particular institutions that had fascinated the earlier sociologists has given way to a more pointed focus on the interrelations between basic structural “entities.” In the effort to avoid excessive reification or a flight into empiricism, the style of theorizing about social control developed in the 1920s—and explicated thereafter—appears

to be markedly viable and appropriate for the continuing tasks of sociologists.

Second, the analysis of social control can be pressed with more pointed concern for causal sequences in social change in particular, with a more explicit and adequate overview of the articulation of "social structure" and political institutions. Sociological analysis is only slowly coming to grips with the crisis of political legitimacy that constitutes the key problematic issue in advanced industrial society, particularly in those nations with multiparty parliamentary institutions.

The noteworthy defect of the early formulations of social control was a viewpoint that saw political institutions as derivative from the social stratification system, almost as if political institutions were thought to be epiphenomenal. The contribution of political sociology since the 1920s has only partially overcome this defect. As sociologists have progressively sought to articulate the relations between social structure and political institutions, they have emphasized the causal priority of the elements of social stratification. They have perceived politics and "political conflict" as manifestations of the underlying social stratification rather than augmenting their approach to politics with an institutional framework associated with the idea of social control (Janowitz 1970). Sociologists have been interested in describing community stratification, in the mode of Robert and Helen Lynd's *Middletown* (1929), or national stratification patterns, by means of the national survey sample, in order to trace the consequences of these hierarchies for political control. In their view, politics is mass political participation, especially electoral behavior. The causal pattern has been from underlying ecological, economic, and occupational structures to social strata to a set of group interests which fashion mass political participation.

Sociologists have yet to explore adequately the implications of an institutional approach to the political process. No doubt the sociological tradition contains examples of an institutional perspective on politics, that is, the viewpoint that political institutions constitute an independent source of societal change and an element for fashioning social structure. But sociologists, including those attached to the social control perspective, have been slow to implement the comprehensive implications of such an assertion. However, the rise and sociopolitical consequences of the welfare state have moved this intellectual agenda into prominence.

The modern political party and modern political institutions penetrate all sectors of society. It is necessary to speak of their decisive consequences for social structure and to recognize that the supremacy of modern political institutions does not insure either their effectiveness or their legitimacy. As a result, trends in political behavior, especially measures of electoral behavior, become key indicators of the effectiveness of social control in

advanced industrial societies with multiparty systems. The crisis in political legitimacy emerges thereby not as a sudden manifestation but rather as the outcome of continuing social change. The cumulative impact of the technological and organizational developments associated with World War II can be taken as the threshold to the new historical era. World War II not only created the institutional base for the welfare state but also contributed to the demand for more extensive political participation.¹⁷

After a short period of limited adaptation following World War II, Western parliamentary institutions have demonstrated their increased inability to produce effective majorities and to create the conditions for authoritative decision making. Therefore, the task of students of social control is not only to explain patterns of personal deviant behavior, such as suicide, criminality, and personal unhappiness, important though these may be. The core issue is to help account for the decline of parliamentary opposition and the rise of unstable executive leadership.

The grave difficulties of parliamentary control can be seen in the patterns of mass political participation common to Western nations. In the briefest terms, there have been a long-term increase in the proportion of the population who declare themselves unaffiliated with the major parties, an increase in shifting of the electoral choice from one national election to the next, and a decline in belief in the effectiveness of the legislative process.

The changes in social stratification resulting from technology, occupational structure, patterns of urbanization, and economic resource allocation do not appear to have increased or produced a highly alienated or anomic electorate. On the contrary, the social stratification patterns result in a highly fragmented electorate with a powerful degree of solidarity within the component social elements. These groupings increase their demands for economic benefits, especially governmental benefits. Thereby persons find themselves, under an advanced industrial society, with their own built-in competing self-interests that are not easily resolved or aggregated into integrated and stable political preferences.

In the three decades since the end of World War II, the structure of political parties in the advanced nations, including the United States, has remained relatively unchanged. The descriptive literature on party organization has not been effectively integrated into macrosociology and the analysis of social control. No doubt the parties require vastly greater resources to perform their political tasks, and the mobilization of these resources paradoxically appears to make them less responsive. Nor has the influx of a new cadre of personnel acting for underrepresented groups altered the internal functioning of the major parties. The issue that the

¹⁷ For an analysis of the transformation of Great Britain into a welfare state under the impact of World War I and World War II, see especially Arthur Marwick (1968).

social control perspective must face is deep. The opportunity to express political demands and to balance them by periodic national elections becomes less and less effective as a crucial element in social control.

During the second half of the 1960s, the strain of social change and political constriction produced a marked escalation of parapolitical movements, outside the institutionalized parties, that frequently used violent symbolism and elements of violence. There has also been a striking increase in efforts to extend civic participation into the management of administrative agencies of government and of voluntary associations. These later efforts, in part a response to the impact of the parapolitical movements, have reflected an implicit recognition of the limitations of periodic national elections as mechanisms of social and political control.

There can be no doubt that sociological literature failed to anticipate the scope and intensity of these social movements, although one can find penetrating analyses of the high levels of societal strain and the constriction of the processes of social control that an advanced industrial society was producing. The sociological writings about these agitations often followed the classic model of the natural history of social movements. Such writings were perceptive in focusing on the impending transformation of these social movements into "interest groups" and highlighted their built-in limitations for influencing patterns of social control.

It was no profound sociological discovery that the protest movements of this period would lead to increased diffuse political violence but hardly to a revolution or a "revolution situation." Nevertheless, their explosive character requires students of social control to reexamine the issue of violence and coercion in social change. In the sharpest terms, what is the relationship between reliance on violence and coercion and the search for effective social control in an advanced industrial society? The question manifests itself at every point in sociological analysis where existing patterns of social control are ineffective.

Historians have made it clear that, regardless of the vast and immeasurable amount of human misery which coercion and violence have produced, the threat and use of force in the past have been essential for achieving, on specific and important occasions, more effective social control. But to explicate the "principles of force" is another matter—that is to formulate propositions of the conditions under which force produces positive contributions to social control. Sociologists have speculated repeatedly on this issue; but how much further has the analysis been pressed beyond the hopeful aspirations of Georges Sorel in *Reflections on Violence* (1914)?

The perspective of social control is grounded in assumptions about interaction and mutual influences. Therefore it raises the persistent and vexatious issue of the consequences of force and coercion for those who initiate or manage their use—whether the goal be the maintenance of a social

structure or its change. Perhaps the central proposition that can be explored is that the use of force and coercion in the search for social control operates within progressively narrower limits in relations both within and between industrial societies.¹⁸ This assertion obviously does not deny the extensive and diffuse patterns of violence under advanced industrialism; nor does it deny violence's decisive importance in particular circumstances. But it does emphasize the emergence of a calculus which points to the expanded self-defeating implications for those who must rely extensively on force and coercion in their efforts to achieve social control in its traditional meaning. Such a calculus of force and coercion reflects at least two trends. There has been an increase in the professed moral sensibilities of the citizenry (which is compatible with political indifference under conditions of ineffective political institutions). Furthermore, the sheer complexity of societal organization has made anticipating the consequences of force—especially given the expanded power of force—much more difficult.

In a period of weakened and ineffective social control in advanced industrial societies, continued conflict and disintegration are alternative or even simultaneous outcomes. Social disintegration implies a reduction in the ability of a group to control the behavior of its members and a decline in interaction and influence; social conflict implies an increase in interaction between social groups on the basis of antagonistic means and goals. In evaluating the consequences of persuasion and coercion with respect to direct social change, we must confront the problem of whether the existing categories of political ideology—the language of political discourse which dominates sociological analysis—are adequate for analyzing social control.

The alternative outcomes of the search for effective social control cannot be analyzed adequately in terms of conventional ideological categories—radicalism, conservatism, or incremental liberalism. There exists a mass of empirical data which highlight the conclusion that these categories are limited in describing mass opinion as well as the realities of institutional practice. Moreover, these categories of political analysis imply a final result, a resolution, and an end state, when in effect we are dealing with a continuous and continuing social process. But the macrosociology and, as a result, the analysis of social control are too often dominated by a narrow format fashioned by political discourse. Thereby the “resolution” or “outcome” of ineffective social control does not necessarily conform to the categories of political ideology. It is necessary at least to assume that, for an advanced industrial society, the alternatives could include such results as chronic and persistent tension and a variety of patterns of stagnation.

In conclusion, it is necessary to return to the point of departure. The

¹⁸ For this process in international relations, see Morris Janowitz (1974).

core element in social control is the idea of self-regulation of the group—whether the group be a face-to-face primary group or the nation-state. In essence, social control is a perspective toward social organization—one which focuses on the outcome of regulative mechanisms. To use the language of empirical social research, it thereby identifies a set of dependent variables applicable to the fullest range of institutional settings. The empirical content of social control depends on the sociologist's ability to clarify and explicate the content and criteria of self-regulation.

Although some sociologists have transformed the content of the term "social control" into that of social conformity and even social repression, the classical usage has persisted. The major advance in the intellectual history of social control has been its linkages to the political process and to the crisis of "political legitimacy." These linkages can be accomplished, not by means of a sociological reductionism, but by a recognition of the boundaries of political institutions and the "supremacy" of politics in an advanced industrial society.

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